

Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
(Translation by Henry Beveridge)¹
Men's Theology Study – October 6, 2021 – 6:30 pm

Book 2 – Of the knowledge of God the Redeemer, in Christ, as first manifested to the fathers, under the law, and thereafter to us under the gospel.

Chapter 12 – Christ, to Perform the Office of Mediator, Behooved to Become Man

Discussion Questions

1. Could God have saved humanity from sin by some other means than the incarnation and subsequent work of Christ on the cross? Was God bound to act in the person of Christ?
2. Would humanity have needed a mediator if Adam had not sinned?

Background – Andreas Osiander (1498-1552)

1. Influential and controversial German Lutheran theologian "...on such issues as the image of God, the work of Christ, and justification."²
2. Osiander's view of predestination led him to believe that Jesus would have become incarnate even if mankind had not fallen into sin. Why? "Justification is the fulfilment of the divine intent behind Adam's original creation—the indwelling of the divine nature of the Logos, Jesus Christ, and the first stage in the deification of man."³
3. Osiander's Views were Similar to Rome⁴
 - a. Justification is not dependent upon the declaration of legal righteousness, but indwelling righteousness, the same righteousness which Adam and Eve had.
 - b. Christ's death does not establish our righteousness before God but restores the righteousness we had before the fall.
 - c. Assurance of salvation does not depend exclusively on the merits of Christ, but on the righteous quality being progressively infused in us. As a result, justification is never instantaneous and complete in this life, but gradual and progressive.
 - d. What does this do to assurance of salvation? It erodes assurance! Assurance is no longer based on the objective, legal declaration of pardon from God, but rather on what is produced in us.

¹Supplemental Material from *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin* by Ford Lewis Battles (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2001 Reprint) and *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes* edited by David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2008).

²Derek Thomas in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, 211.

³Ibid.

⁴<https://bookofconcord.org/introductory-materials/historical-introductions/the-osiandrian-and-stancarian-controversies/>

- A. Three Reasons Why It Was Necessary that the Mediator be God and Man (s. 1-3).
1. Only one truly God and truly man could bridge the gulf between God and humanity (s. 1).
 - i. Is this the only way God could have done it? No, it "...flowed from the divine decree on which the salvation of man depended. What was best for us, our most merciful Father determined."
 - ii. No child of Adam or angel can bridge this gap. God must condescend to us since it is not in our power to ascend to him. How might God condescend to us?
 - iii. Even if mankind had remained free from sin, mankind is in too humble a condition to penetrate to God. How much more so when sin enters the equation?!
 - iv. 1 Tim 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Why is Jesus called "man" in this passage?
 2. Only one truly God and truly man could turn sons of men to sons of God (s. 2).
 - i. What is double imputation?
 - ii. How does the incarnation impact assurance of salvation?
 - Christ became as we are with a real human body, real flesh, and real bones.
 - He took what is peculiar to us, to give to us what is peculiar to him.
 - Inheritance through adoption: his Father becomes our Father; his God becomes our God (John 20:17).
 - iii. To swallow up death and conquer sin, one who is truly and divinely Life and Righteousness must come and defeat death and sin.
 3. Only one truly God and truly man could be obedient in man's place (s. 3).
 - i. In order for God to be truly holy, his justice must be satisfied and the penalty of sin must be paid. How was this accomplished? First, federal headship. Second, hypostatic union.
 - ii. Take confidence in Jesus because he wasn't just any man. "...the expected Redeemer was that son of Abraham and David whom God had promised in the Law and in the Prophets. Here believers have another advantage. Tracing up his origin in regular series to David and Abraham, they more distinctly recognize him as the Messiah celebrated by so many oracles."
 - iii. While his lineage encourages our confidence in him, his lineage is not what saves. "...**common nature** is the pledge of our union with the Son of God; that, clothed with our flesh, he warred to death with sin that he might be our triumphant conqueror; that the flesh which he received of us he offered in sacrifice, in order that by making expiation he might wipe away our guilt, and appease the just anger of his Father."
 - iv. What happens when you separate Jesus' deity from his humanity? What happens when you separate Jesus' humanity from his deity?

B. Objections (s. 4-7).

1. Christ would still become man even if no redemption of mankind had been needed (s. 4).
 - i. Calvin rejects this view. "...the whole of Scripture proclaims that he was clothed with flesh in order to become a Redeemer..."
 - ii. The types and shadows of Christ and his work throughout Scripture point to a Redeemer. What are some examples?
 - iii. Jesus' own testimony about the reason for his incarnation was for the purpose that he might be the Redeemer.
 - iv. Suppose Jesus were not the Redeemer. What would be the implications?
 - The honor of the priesthood would fall
 - He would not be our righteousness
 - He would be stripped of all the titles which Scripture invests him
 - He would not be the propitiation to take away sin
2. Even if Adam had not sinned, Christ would still have become man to show his love for man (s. 5).
 - i. Calvin's response is that man's condemned condition and Christ's coming are joined together by an eternal decree.
 - Eph 1:4-7, "...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace..."
 - ii. It is wrong to speculate beyond the revelation of Scripture.
3. Man was created in God's image as a pattern of the Messiah to come (s. 6).
 - i. Calvin says that Osiander's argument is that God formed man on the model of the future Messiah, "...in order to resemble him whom the Father had already determined to clothe with flesh." Therefore, had Adam never fallen into sin, Christ would still have been made man.
 - ii. Furthermore, Osiander "...thinks he was the first to see what the image of God was..."
 - iii. Adam did bear God's image, but not as a pattern of the Messiah to come. In what way did he bear God's image? "...the likeness of God is to be sought for only in those marks of superiority with which God has distinguished Adam above the other animals."
 - iv. Jesus is the head of both men and angels.
 - The angels constantly enjoy the presence of God because they are like the Son.

- Redeemed humanity will take on a form like the angels, that we might enjoy God's presence.
4. Point-by-point refutation of Osiander's objections (s. 7).
 - i. Osiander objects that without an immutable decree concerning the incarnation of the Son, God is a liar.
 - Jesus is called the second Adam (1 Cor 15:47) because the incarnation was already decreed by God. If it were not, Paul ought to have called Jesus the first Adam.
 - ii. Osiander argues that if Adam had not sinned, he would have been the image of himself, and not of Christ.
 - "I maintain, on the contrary, that although the Son of God had never become incarnate, nevertheless the image of God was conspicuous in Adam, both in his body and his soul; in the rays of this image it always appeared that Christ was truly head, and had in all things the pre-eminence."
 - iii. Osiander claims that Christ could only have supremacy over the angels unless he were a man.
 - Read Col 1:15-18
 - iv. Osiander thinks if Christ had not been born man, then the Church would be without a head.
 - "In the same way as angels enjoyed him for their head, could he not by his divine energy preside over men, and by the secret virtue of his Spirit quicken and cherish them as his body, until they were gathered into heaven to enjoy the same life with the angels?"
 - v. Osiander views Gen 2:23 as a prophecy of the incarnation.
 - Gen 2:23, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
 - Calvin points out that the reason Jesus used this verse was to condemn divorce.
 - Furthermore, Paul uses the verse in Eph 5:30-32 to use the figure of marriage for our union with Christ.